

MIAMI, FL, September 06, 2014 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- The Committee for Fair and Equitable Distribution of Public Contracts has released a report examining and challenging the accuracy of the vast majority of the findings in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Disparity study. The in-depth study, *Leveling the Playing Field: A Response to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Disparity Study Report*, was sponsored by the Urban League of Greater Miami, the Miami-Dade Branch of the NAACP, and BAC Funding Corporation. The findings will be publicly released to the business community during a press conference and community meeting on Wednesday, September 10th from 6PM - 7:30PM at Freedom Hall of the Urban League offices located at 8400 NW 25th Ave, Miami.

The findings along with 15 recommendations were presented to Superintendent Alberto Carvalho who agreed with 13 of the 15 recommendations and gave a commitment to provide a letter of agreement to implement the recommendations. However, the Superintendent has not kept on his word, and the Committee is urging the Superintendent and MDCPS that promises made should be promises kept. The Committee also urges the Office of the Inspector General to review the report.

"Promises made should be promises kept," says T. Willard Fair, President & CEO of the Urban League of Greater Miami. "This is not isolated to being just a Black issue; this is a fairness issue and anyone who is in support of fairness whether white, Black, woman, Hispanic or any other group should be concerned and outraged."

The response provides substantiating evidence that the disparity study commissioned by MDCPS is flawed, unreliable, and troubling based on errors and omissions found and a review of the District's dismantled Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) program. As the fourth largest school district touted as a "truly global multi-cultural and multi-ethnic school system" with Black students accounting for nearly 23.5% (82,939) of the district's 353,152 students, MDCPS has established a pattern and practice of denying African-Americans fair and equitable contracting and sub-contracting opportunities in its procurement and construction contracts. An investigation into the District's procurement practices revealed that of the \$7.5 billion in total procurement expenditures from 1986 to 2009, African-American firms received less than two percent of those contracts (\$107.7 million). Black firms also received less than eight percent of the \$7 billion spent in construction and design contracts (\$546 million) well behind Hispanic firms that received 27% and non-minority firms that received 60%.

Superintendent Carvalho embarked on an aggressive campaign to convince voters to approve a \$1.2 billion bond referendum to renovate facilities and update technology. During the referendum campaign, the Superintendent visited Black churches, spoke with Black media, and met with various groups to garner the Black vote. He committed that the bond initiative would provide economic development and employment opportunities to the tune of 9,200 jobs during

the first three years, would promote greater public/private partnership ventures, and would provide citizen advisory and oversight committees to ensure timely and equitable distribution of projects. Instead, MDCPS and the Superintendent has moved in the opposite direction of making good on those promises of inclusion and diversity in contracting, and there has been very little participation by Black subcontractors to date.

"We will not stand to see our community continue to be left out of opportunities that have the potential to create sustainable economic development in our community," shares Adora Obi Nweze, President of the Miami-Dade Branch of the NAACP. "We will hold the Superintendent and the school board up to their commitment so that black-owned firms have equitable contracting opportunities."

The Bond Construction Program is a prime opportunity for MDCPS to invest in the growth and development of its local M/WBEs, and it would be irresponsible and destructive not to do so. The Committee, comprised of small business owners, financial investors, developers, and community leaders, recommends that MDCPS reject its Disparity Study and place an immediate moratorium on the Bond and Capital Construction Program. As the largest government unit and job creator in the County overseeing a massive budget of over \$5.6 billion dollars in public funds, MDCPS and the Superintendent is urged to step up and demonstrate its commitment to fairness and equality.

Media, business leaders, and concerned community members are invited to attend the press conference and community meeting. An advanced copy of the full report is also available upon request by contacting Fabiola@BlueprintCreativeGroup.com.